

Half (49%) of Ontarians Say They're Likely to Watch the Debate as Majority (53%) Agrees Leader's Debate Most Important Part of Campaign

Six in Ten (59%) Say Leader's Debate Matters to Them, One in Three (34%) Agree They've Changed Their Vote as a Result of a Previous Leader's Debate

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Toronto, ON – Half (49%) of Ontarians say they're at least somewhat likely (14% very likely/34% somewhat) to watch the leader's debate tomorrow evening, according to a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of Global Television, CFRB Newstalk 1010 and the Ottawa Citizen. The other half (51%) of Ontarians are 'not likely' (26% not at all/26% not very) to take in the verbal sparring airing at 6:30pm on Tuesday evening.

In a campaign that has yet to find a ballot-box issue or to capture the interest of most Ontarians (a previous Ipsos Reid poll suggested that most Ontarians weren't going to start paying attention until the debates), it's not surprising that a majority (53%) 'agrees' (12% strongly/40% somewhat) that 'the leader's debate is the most important part of the campaign'. Furthermore, six in ten (59%) 'agree' (14% strongly/45% somewhat) that the 'leader's debate matters' to them, with only four in ten (41%) 'disagreeing' (16% strongly/24% somewhat) that this is the case.

In the federal race, the debate was the starting point for the "Orange Crush" surge in the polls for the late Jack Layton and the NDP, suggesting that debates do indeed matter and influence votes. In fact, one in three (34%) 'agree' (8% strongly/26% somewhat) that they

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have 'changed their mind in the past about who to vote for as a result of what they saw during the leader's debate'. Two thirds (66%) 'disagree' (34% strongly/31% somewhat) that debates have helped change their mind in the past.

While Ontarians await the debate, they don't appear to be completely satisfied with the format or the number of debates. Three quarters (76%) 'agree' (40% strongly/36% somewhat) that 'The Green Party Leader, Mike Schreiner, should have been allowed to participate in the debate', despite the common practice being only to include parties that have representation in the Legislature. Just one quarter (24%) 'disagree' (14% strongly/10% somewhat) that he should have been invited to participate.

Most (66%) Ontarians 'agree' (22% strongly/44% somewhat) that 'the leaders should hold more than one debate', while just one in three (34%) 'disagree' (12% strongly/22% somewhat). Tim Hudak and Andrea Horwath did indeed hold a debate in Northern Ontario, but Dalton McGuinty declined to participate due to scheduling conflicts. A majority (64%) 'agrees' (19% strongly/45% somewhat) that they would 'support a second leader's debate to be held in Northern Ontario' – interestingly, those in Northern Ontario are no more likely to agree at 65%. Conversely, a minority (36%) of Ontarians, overall, 'disagree' (15% strongly/21% somewhat) that they would support a second leader's debate to be held in Northern Ontario.

Likely a result of being the incumbent government, Ontarians believe that Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty (54%) has most to lose in the leader's debate, while one in three (31%) believe Tim Hudak has most to lose and 15% believe NDP leader Andrea Horwath has most to lose. But thinking about who has the most to gain, four in ten (43%) believe Andrea Horwath has the biggest opportunity to gain momentum from the debate, followed by one in



three (32%) who believe Hudak has most to gain, and one quarter (25%) who believe McGuinty has most to gain.

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between September 22-26 2011, on behalf Global Television, CFRB Newtalk 1010, and the Ottawa Citizen. For this survey, a sample of 816 Ontarians from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and political composition to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had the entire population of adults in Ontario been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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